**Activities Not Managed In-Country:
A Review of the Information Collection Process**

Bureau from Policy and Program Coordination
U.S. Agency for International Development

Activities Not Managed In-Country[1]
A Review of the Information Collection Process

To improve the process for collection of information on Activities Not Managed In-Country, PPC and the intra-agency team on Activities Not Managed In-Country assessed changes that need to be made.

Background:
PPC has received 780 Activity Information Sheets as of May 2001. There is no question that using the AISs to catalog activities not managed in-country has brought to the surface many activities that were previously unknown to regional bureaus and missions. The information coming from the database is already beginning to be used: LAC has begun an analysis of activities in their region for the purpose of examining management intensity; one activity manager in G/ENV has used his AISs to build a web-site for his partners; ANE has plans to use the information to synchronize activities in their region with ANE strategies; LPA has used the database to respond to inquiries from the Hill; and program offices were able to access the data for preparation of the Country Overview sections of the Congressional Budget Justification. Activity Information Sheets were used some in the last BPBS process and will be used to a greater extent in the upcoming year. Most recently, Hill staffers praised USAID for having this information available. A next logical step might be for field missions to consult the database in the preparation of country strategies.

Despite these successes, much could be done to improve the process of collecting this information from activity managers. Below are the issues that were identified by the Intra-Agency team on Activities Not Managed In-country and how they were resolved. PPC was not able to incorporate all recommendations of the Bureau Representatives on the team for technical or practical reasons, but this in no way diminishes the contributions of the team members.

Improvements to the Template

---

[1] This topic is historically known in the Agency as "Non-presence." Non-presence applies to countries where USAID has a program but no US Direct-Hire (USDH) present. For the purpose of this data collection, the name non-presence is misleading however. The Agency is also interested in activities in countries where we have a USDH presence, but where the activity is managed outside the country, is not part of the Mission's Country Strategic Plan (CSP) or R4 reporting, nor does it directly contribute to the achievement of any of the SOs in the Mission's CSP. Unfortunately, the name "Activities Not Managed In-Country" is almost equally misleading. Some activities may not be managed in country, but are reported in a CSP or R4 and therefore would not be included. Finally, we do want to include activities that are managed in country but where there is no USDH. Despite this confusion, for this paper, we will stick with this term in order to continue the move away from the term "non-presence," but the alternative of "non-mission" activity has been suggested and should be discussed.

Problem: Several activity managers commented on both the insufficiency of the Agency Guidance on the process and the lack of clarity in the template.

Resolution: Instructions are now built directly into the template in the form of hidden text. The hidden text is turned on and off by clicking the paragraph button in the MSWord "Standard" tool bar. At each cell, an activity manager can see instructions for filling out that cell. At the end of this assessment is a table listing each cell of the template, changes to the cell, additional cells that have been added, and instruction language.

Improvements Needed in the Collection Process

Problem: Over the course of the collection effort, PPC made several accommodations to activity managers with activities in multiple countries. For example, an activity manager could fill out one sheet for one country and if the activity and funding was nearly similar for all the other countries in the activity, the activity manager could provide a list of the other countries and the contract database managers (LTS) would populate the database with the other countries. The problem is the AIS was not designed to accommodate this alternative and activity managers were submitting their "list" of countries in every conceivable format. This created a substantial burden for the contractor.

Resolution: LTS suggested that the sheets get "tagged" so that they would not get missed during the technical process of converting the sheets to data in the NPC database. Instructions have now been added that will tell an activity manager to send around an e-mail for clearance that includes the message that the AIS file contains a multiple-country list. This will help LTS avoid incorrectly processing these multiple country AIS sheets.

Improvements Needed in the Clearance Process

The Interagency team encountered several issues revolving around the process and purpose of getting GC and regional bureau clearance on the AISs as well as the way in which AISs will be physically moved from one office to another.

Problem I: Activity managers have been sending AISs for clearance to the GC and regional bureaus simultaneously. Though E&E preferred to keep it this way, other bureaus, including the GC, have indicated they would prefer to have the sheets sent consecutively, i.e. first to the originating Bureau AIS Coordinator, then to the GC and then the regional bureau.

Resolution: In the new version, activity managers are instructed to include routing information in their e-mail. The activity manager would send the e-mail to the Bureau AIS Coordinator who would then forward it to the GC, the GC would clear and forward it to the next individual indicated in the e-mail and so on.

Clearing officials also receive instructions. For example, the GC and regional bureau are instructed to fill in the blanks with the clearance date and who cleared, unless other arrangements are made with the originating bureau.

Problem II: The AIS last year allowed for a category of country called "worldwide." This category was devised for those rare cases when we transfer money to a pool of resources where not only can we not distinguish our money from another donor's, but, usually, neither we nor the implementor can say where the dollars went. Unfortunately, this designation causes many problems with those clearing. GC has indicated that they don't know <u>what</u> they are clearing since the original purpose of their clearance focused on country-specific prohibitions. Likewise the regional bureaus have been asked to clear on these whether something may go on in their region or not.

Some activity managers inappropriately used finer breakdowns for their regions or stated "regional." The GC has concluded that a finer distinction such as this would cause even more problems though most of the regional bureaus would prefer to have a breakdown at the bureau level, e.g. E&E Region, ANE Region, AFR Region, and LAC Region.

E&E suggested that instead of using "worldwide" or any other breakdown that we use the term, "not country specific." The GC preferred this category over "worldwide" or a region breakdown but admitted that it did not solve their problem of knowing what it is they are supposed to clear.

Resolution: The conclusion reached is that we will no longer use the designation "worldwide." The new AIS will use the "not country specific" designation for these cases. This category will continue to be used only in certain cases, and PPC will be the arbiter that determines if such a designation is appropriate. In the "Brief Activity Description" section, the activity manager will specify the general region and provide any additional country specific information available as appropriate or practical. Furthermore, only information copies will be sent to the GC and applicable regional bureaus (i.e. clearance will not be required or requested).

Problem III: The last issue in this category involved regional bureau clearance in general. Up until now, regional bureau "clearance" meant only that the regional bureau was aware of the activity and not aware of any coordination issues that would affect initiation or continuation of the activity. For the on-going activities that we were collecting information on last spring, ANE decided that they wanted to see the sheets for "info only." G Bureau has questioned if a regional bureau clearance was necessary on any of the sheets and if they shouldn't all be "info only" on the grounds that regional bureaus should have seen/cleared on other formal documentation earlier in the activity planning phase. Comments from the regional bureaus indicate that they do not think this is the case; regional bureaus did not believe they were seeing all activity planning documentation for clearance.

Resolution: As we begin the new fiscal year, rather than mostly on-going activities that have already received their funding, we will be getting new activities and new funding for old activities that need to be cleared. We will continue with the current formulation for regional bureau clearance for the following reasons:

1) As mentioned above, at the activity planning phase, the country of implementation may not have been known and, therefore, regional bureaus should be alerted for their information as well as to be able to raise any issues involving coordination.
2) For multi-year activities, the planning phase may have occurred so long ago that regions may be included that were not part of earlier design, memories may have dimmed, or country situations may have changed.
3) We still may encounter coordination issues that require reconsideration of the activity.

Failures to Supply Correct Information

Problem I: Insufficient information has been provided by some activity managers in the field, "Prepared by."

Resolution: Activity managers must now supply their name, office designation, phone number and may also supply the file directory.

Problem II: LTS found that there was a wide variety of information included in the Operating Unit Objective field and more particularly the Objective Number field.

Resolution: Originally the intent was that these two fields would reflect the Strategic Objective titles and the six-digit Objective ID number as found in the operating unit's R4. Activity managers must consistently identify objective numbers by their Phoenix codes. The eventual goal is to attempt to create a link between these Objective ID numbers as found in the AISs and the Objective ID numbers as identified and processed into the R4 database. In this way, we could provide users with the relevant portion of the funding unit's R4, which describes the strategic objective funding this activity. However, all Objective ID numbers must be consistently identified and entered into the AIS sheets to make this work. AISs without correct ID numbers will be returned to the sender.

Updating Activity Sheets for Next Year

The system we have devised for updating AISs is as follows: The Activity Managers will search the NPC database web page to find the AIS that they need to update. When they retrieve the AIS for that activity, there will be a link which they will click on to download a copy of the AIS for that activity. They will then

make the necessary revisions to the AIS they have downloaded, and then follow the necessary clearance procedures. When all clearances have been obtained, they will return the AIS as an attachment to the npctemplate@dec.cdie.org mail address.

Other Areas of Concern

Problem I: Due to the large volume of AISs, there was often a great deal of confusion around which ones had been cleared and sent to the database, which ones were outstanding and so on. As a result, duplicates were often sent to the database.

Though PPC has no resolution to this problem, experience in some bureaus indicates that having a central repository for the sheets makes some sense, but that each bureau needs to develop a system for the movement and tracking of AISs within the bureau.

Problem II: Some regional bureaus held on to AISs too long.

Resolution: Activity managers may specify in the clearance e-mail the date by which they require clearance, not later than one month from the date the e-mail is sent. If clearance is not received by that date the AIS is assumed to be cleared by the individual it was sent to as of the deadline date.

Problem III: We are aware of offices that are not complying with the guidance. For example, Africa Bureau recently called attention to at least $500 million of Food Aid in FY00 in AFR that went unreported in R4s by country or the non-presence database.[2] The committee acknowledges that there are going to be activities that we don't know about that if they are not willingly added to the database by an activity manager, we will never know it, but for those we do know about, our committee does not currently have the teeth to enforce the guidance.

Resolution: We recommend that PPC begin a dialog with Bureaus about the cases of non-compliance that we know about, and seek compliance.

Problem IV: There are still categories of activities that are so difficult to categorize that they beg the question, "Is this reporting requirement appropriate for this activity?" The USAID-Israel Cooperative Development Research program comes to mind.

Resolution: Over the next year the intra-agency committee will examine activities of this type more closely to determine if they should be included in the database or not.

---

[2] For example, Burkina Faso: $14,016,600. Cameroon: $81,900. Cape Verde: $4,016,100. Chad: $3,402,000. Djibouti: $1,427,000. Gambia: $2880,500. Mauritania: $1,820,500.

Sample E-mail and Table of Changes to AIS

Sample E-Mail

TO: John Doe, G/PDSP
From: Jane Doe, G/EGAD
Subject: Activity Information Sheet for France
Attached please find the AIS for our economic growth activity in France. This AIS is for nine other countries as well. A list is contained in the sheet. Your clearances are required by MM/DD/01. If your clearance is not received by then we will assume you have cleared as of the date above. Routing: Please forward this e-mail to the next person in the list below with a cc to me. When clearing, please update the attachment, reattach and forward with the e-mail. GC: (GC contact name goes here) E&E: Jimmy Doe, EE/OM G: Jane Doe, G/EGAD

AIS TABLE		
Cell	**Recommended change**	**Instruction Language**
Country of Implementation:	None	Enter one country of implementation. If this activity will also take place in other countries, and the amounts to be expended are approximately the same, please include the following in parenthesis after the first country: (The information in this document also applies to the following countries:___). Please also state in the e-mail you send for clearance and when submitting this sheet to the database that it applies to more than one country. Be sure that the estimated expenditures reported below apply to ONLY ONE COUNTRY. In the case where costs can not be meaningfully attributed to one country, use the designation "Not Country Specific." In these cases, GC and regional bureau clearance would be "info only". This designation is to be used only under very limited circumstances. Please contact PPC for further information on this category before using.
Activity Name:	None	Before proceeding further, please determine 1) if you have an activity per the definition in ADS 200.4 or by contacting PPC/PC, and 2) in countries where USAID has a mission, if your activity is not already covered in an existing country-level strategic plan or R4. You can verify the latter either by checking the R4 database or by contacting the desk officer.
Operating Unit: Funding	Operating Unit Funding	Please enter the symbol for the Operating Unit that has responsibility for funding this activity
Managing	None	Please enter the symbol for the Operating Unit that has responsibility for managing the activity
Operating Unit Objective:	Operating Unit SO	Please enter the full title of the Global or Regional Strategic Objective this activity contributes to
Objective Number:	Objective ID number	Please enter the unique 8 digit code for the SO that appears in the NMS and the R4
Fiscal Year	None	Please enter the fiscal year in which funds are expected to be expended regardless of the year in which the funds were obligated
Amount	Narrow the dollar ranges on the drop-down menu. Suggest: Less than 25,000; 25,000-50,000; 50,000-75,000; 75,000-100,000; 100,000-150,000; 150,000-200,000; 200,000-400,000; 400,000-600,000; 600,000-1 mill; 1 mill-2mill; 2 mill-4 mill; 4 mill-6 mill; 6 mill-10 mill, greater than 10 mill.	You MUST choose a range
Fund	None	Please enter the source of funding for this activity. If you use split funding for this activity, please enter one fund in one column for the fiscal year of expenditure. Then enter the second fund in the next column for the same fiscal year of expenditure.
Implementing Institutions:	None	Please enter all institutions contributing to the achievement of this activity
Host country Counterpart Institutions:	None	These are counterparts within the government
Brief Activity Description	None	Please enter information that best briefly describes your activity and will be understandable to outside readers
Brief rationale why activity should take place in country identified (optional)	None	Information here should be as country specific as possible.
NEW: Start date/End date (mm/dd/yy to mm/dd/yy)		For on-going activities, please enter to the best of your ability the original start date of the activity.

		For new Activities, enter the date you expect the activity to begin. In both cases enter the date the activity is expected to end (not the date funding ends).
Embassy coordination office	Add Embassy/Comrcl to the list	Must be filled out ("none" is an option)
In-country monitor:		Must be filled out ("none" is an option)
Date activity sheet last revised		A date must be entered here even if there are no revisions.
Prepared by:		Enter first initial and last name, Office Symbol, and Phone number. You may include directory structure and file name if useful. You have now completed your part of the AIS. Now send an E-mail to your Bureau AIS Coordinator with this document attached. In the E-mail please specify if this sheet is for one or multiple countries. Also indicate the routing path you would like the AIS to take. For example, G AIS Coordinator (Name), GC (Name), LAC (Name), G (Your own name). Once you have received the e-mail back with all clearances, please forward the e-mail to **npctemplate@dec.org**
GC clearance (mm/dd/yyyy)	(mm/dd/yy; Name) Recommend that this cell and the three that follow be moved from their current positions in the AIS to the positions represented here.	This section should be filled out by the GC contact unless otherwise arranged. The GC contact will then forward the e-mail with attachment to the next individual indicated in the e-mail. If you have received clearance from the GC in the last three months through a different mechanism, you may use that clearance here. Simply state the date clearance was given and the document through which clearance was obtained in the cell below.
Regional bureau Clearance (mm/dd/yyyy)	(mm/dd/yy; Name)	This section should be filled out by the regional bureau contact unless otherwise arranged. The regional bureau contact will then forward the e-mail with attachment to the next individual indicated on the e-mail.
Document through which clearance was provided:		Please indicate if this AIS, an e-mail, or another document is being used as the principal form of clearance. Be as specific as possible (dates, etc.).